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**WHY ROCKEFELLER TRIED
COVER UP THE CIA PROBE****Rocky's Watergate?**

On January 21, 1975, then Vice-President Nelson Rockefeller, chairman of the blue-ribbon investigating commission that was to get to the bottom of illegal CIA activities, quietly called CIA chief William Colby into his office and urged him not to tell all. It was the most blatant cover-up attempt since Watergate.

The vice-president's argument was that, for national-security reasons, it was not necessary for his commission to be told "everything." Rockefeller, therefore, urged Colby not to volunteer any information and to confine himself to bare-bone answers to questions that the commissioners might ask him. But Rockefeller also had personal reasons for his request: He had participated twenty years earlier in decisions involving the illegal CIA behavior that now was being investigated.

It is unclear whether Rockefeller acted on his own or with the knowledge and approval of President Ford, who, on January 4, 1975, had named the Commission on CIA Activities Within the United States to look into published allegations that the agency had engaged in illegal operations against American citizens on U.S. soil.

It does appear, however, that the vice-president failed to inform the rest of the commission of his request to Colby, and the commissioners may still be unaware that their own chairman tried to sabotage their work.

Colby, who was fired by Ford in November, 1975—apparently because he had been too cooperative with the commission as well as with a subsequent Senate investigation—refused to comment on reports concerning Rockefeller's cover-ups, saying he would neither deny nor confirm them.

Likewise, Colby refused to say whether the book he is currently writing on his CIA career, to be published next year, includes an account of the Rockefeller pressures. Rockefeller himself could not be reached for comment.

Accounts provided by highly authoritative informants said that Rockefeller's approach to Colby was made on January 21, 1975, immediately following the second meeting of the commission in a conference room in the Executive Office Building (EOB), across the West

As the story is reconstructed from these accounts, Colby had been quite forthcoming during this session. The first session, on January 14, was taken up by Colby's general review of the CIA's past activities. But on January 21, he had volunteered to the commission that during the 1950s and the 1960s the agency had engaged in secret experiments with LSD, which had resulted in at least two deaths.

Colby's revelation seems to have upset Rockefeller considerably. Knowledgeable informants believe that the vice-president—and possibly Ford—were worried that Colby might follow it up with such other damaging disclosures as the CIA program for assassinating foreign leaders. Consequently, Rockefeller invited Colby for a private conversation in the vice-presidential office at the EOB, undertaking to convince him that national security would be endangered if the commission were to learn too many CIA secrets.*

There is no precise version of Colby's reply to Rockefeller. It is known, however, that Colby took the view that not only the commission but the Congress as well should be fully informed of all facts pertaining to the CIA's activities in the domestic field. (The commission's mandate, under Ford's executive order, limited the inquiry to CIA operations at home which were in violation of the agency's charter.)

According to Colby's CIA friends, the director thought it was an error on Ford's part to establish the blue-ribbon

**Rockefeller's request for discretion, of course, constituted an insult to the integrity of the commission whose members had been chosen by Ford, Rockefeller, and their senior advisers.*

The commission's members were John T. Connor, former secretary of commerce in the Johnson administration and chairman of the board of the Allied Chemical Corporation; C. Douglas Dillon, former secretary of the Treasury, undersecretary of state, ambassador to France, and, at the time, managing director of Dillon, Read & Company, the New York investment-banking firm; Erwin N. Griswold, former solicitor general and former dean of the Harvard Law School; Lane Kirkland, secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO; General Lyman L. Lemnitzer, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Ronald Reagan, former governor of California; and Edgar F. Shannon Jr., former president of the

after another name had been discarded) precisely to preempt congressional investigations—an attempt that failed, as it turned out.

This preemption stemmed from the fear of what is known in CIA parlance as the "family jewels." These are the agency's most jealously guarded secrets concerning its past operations. The "jewels" had been buried for years in the agency's secret archives at its Langley, Virginia, headquarters, although a great many records had been destroyed (particularly those relating to the 25-year mind-control program in which LSD and other dangerous drugs were used), and some of the secrets survive only in CIA officials' memories.

It was James R. Schlesinger who first began digging into the family jewels when he became CIA director in February, 1973, replacing Richard Helms. What Schlesinger found led him to issue orders to end a long series of illegal programs ranging from the agency's spying on American radicals and political dissenters to illegal opening of international mail, the LSD testing, and the planning of foreign leaders' assassinations. The search for the jewels was continued by Colby when he took over from Schlesinger in August, 1973 (after Schlesinger had been appointed defense secretary by Richard Nixon).

Neither Schlesinger nor Colby, however, considered it necessary to inform Nixon or anybody else outside the CIA of their discoveries. The past was the past, and, after all, they had taken all the necessary measures to halt questionable agency operations.

When Ford became president in August, 1974, Colby and his deputy for clandestine operations, William Nelson, briefed him on ongoing major intelligence operations. But again they did not